

HPAS/SLAA

Serving the Adirondack, Champlain, St. Lawrence Region of New York State
 Mission: To conserve and restore natural ecosystems in the Adirondacks, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.



Volume 36 Number 2

June—August 2008

Annual Chapter Picnic Indian Creek Nature Center Saturday, July 26, 2008

This year's annual gathering will be held at Indian Creek Nature Center in Canton. Beginning at 9 a.m., there will be field trips scheduled on the lovely trails at the Center. Bring along a picnic lunch for a noon-time gathering at the Nature Center pavilion. There are upscale outhouses nearby!

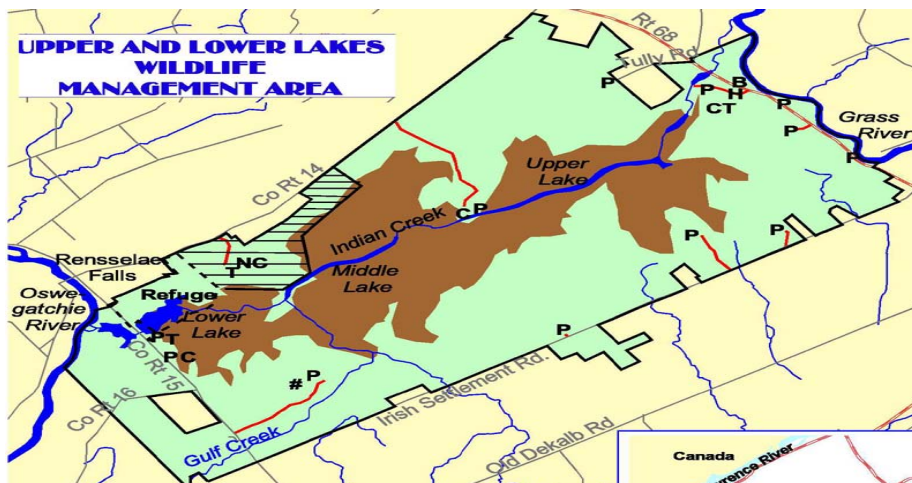
Members and their families will enjoy the wide variety of species found along the many primarily-level trails at Indian Creek Nature Center. Trails lead through shrubland, marsh, wetlands, and forest habitats. There is an observation tower overlooking the north end of Lower Lake, and a boardwalk leading by ponds, marsh, and open grassy areas. Some of the many species that nest in this area include: American Black Duck, Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Osprey, Northern Harrier, American Woodcock, Black Tern, Willow Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, and Golden-winged Warbler.

Indian Creek Nature Center is a 300-acre tract of upland and marsh habitats within the 8,782-acre Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The DEC leases the 300-acre tract to The North Country Conservation Education Association. The Upper and Lower Lakes WMA is included in Audubon New York's 60,000-acre Lisbon Grasslands Important Bird Area.

Participants can explore the many other locations around the Upper and Lower Lakes WMA either before our 9 a.m. meeting, or after lunch. There is another observation tower along County Route 15 on the western side of Lower Lake. (See the map of the WMA.) Bring binoculars and a scope if you have one.

Directions: From the intersection of Routes 11 and 68 in Canton, take Route 68 NW (toward Ogdensburg) for approximately 5 miles to a left turn onto Rensselaer Falls Road. Travel for approximately 3.5 miles to the main entrance for Indian Creek Nature Center on your left. Drive in to the pavilion area near a circular turn-around. For more information, contact Joan Collins at:

jecollins@twcny.rr.com or (315) 261-4246.



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High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc.

A chapter of National Audubon Society
serving the Adirondack/Champlain region
of northern New York, including Clinton,
Essex, Franklin and Hamilton counties.

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High Peaks Audubon Newsletter is published by
High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 36 No. 2

Tuesday, July 1, 2008 Low's Ridge/Upper Dam Trail in Piercefild-Colton (St. Lawrence Co.)

Time: 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Directions: Meet at the Raquette Falls parking area on Route 421. Take Route 30 (between Long Lake and Tupper Lake) to Route 421. Follow Route 421 for a little over a half mile to Raquette Falls. Participants can car pool or car-caravan from this location to the trailhead.

Bring: Water, lunch, sunscreen, bug repellent, binoculars, appropriate clothes and waterproof hiking shoes.

Distance: Five miles round trip on a level dirt road. There is an optional 1.5 mile round trip hike up Low's Ridge for views of the Bog River Valley and High Peaks.

Hike Leaders: Joan Collins & Amy Freiman

Register by calling Joan at (315) 261-4246 or jecollins@twcny.rr.com

Saturday, July 5, 2008 Hudson River to Opalescent River

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Directions: Meet at the parking lot for the Hanging Spear Falls approach to The Flowed Lands and Allen Mt—0.5 miles (on the right) before the end of the road at the Upper Works parking lot. Take Route 28N 5 miles east from the Town Hall in Newcomb to the access road to Tahawus; or from I-87 exit 29 take the Blue Ridge Road 18 miles west. Take the Tahawus Road 6 miles and bear left at the fork (sign for Mt. Marcy and the High Peaks); go 3 miles to the parking lot on the right.

Bring: Water, snacks/lunch, bug dope, sunscreen, appropriate attire for the weather, sturdy/waterproof hiking boots, binoculars.

Description: 7.4 miles round trip. The terrain varies from old logging roads to trails through the woods with easy to moderate changes in grade; we'll cross the Hudson River on a suspension bridge, Lake Jimmy on a long wooden



bridge and circle Lake Sally before arriving at the Opalescent River. Last year on this trip at this time we saw many species of warbler including Mourning and Canada, Olive-sided flycatcher, a nesting loon and many other species.

Hike Leaders: John & Pat Thaxton

Register: Call 518.576.4232 or email: JPThax5317@aol.com

Saturday, July 12, 2008
Osgood Pond/Outlet Canoe Trip
Brighten (Franklin Co.)

Time: 8 a.m. to noon

Directions: Meet where the road to White Pine Camp crosses the outlet from Jones Pond leading to Osgood Pond. Google (kmz) and jpg maps showing the trip location and route of travel (in red) are available here: <http://masterimages.org/downloads/>.

Bring: Your canoe or kayak, paddles, PFDs, sunscreen, snacks and water.

Leader: Larry Master

Register by calling Larry Master at (518) 523-2214.

Expected and hoped for species include Palm and other Warblers, Black-backed and/or Three-toed Woodpeckers, Gray Jays, Lincoln's Sparrows, Mink Frogs, freshwater mussels, and lots of odonates (dragonflies & damselflies).

Great Adirondack Birding Celebration
Field Trips
June 6 – 8, 2008

Please register for all trips with the Paul Smith's Visitor Interpretive Center by calling (518) 327-3000. For additional information on all the weekend events, visit the Paul Smith's VIC web site at: www.adkvic.org.

Friday, June 6, 2008

Boreal Ecology Hike Paul Smiths VIC Property 2:00 p.m.
Owl Prowl and Night Sounds (Paul Smiths VIC following the keynote speaker)

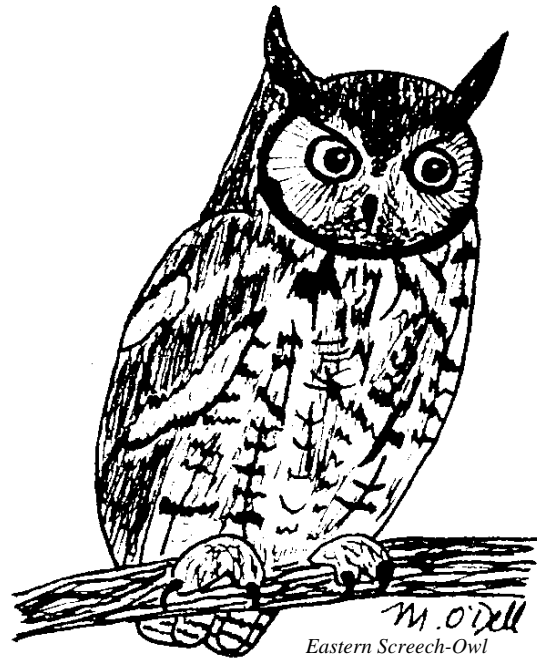
Saturday, June 7, 2008

(77:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. unless indicated otherwise)

Bird Banding at the VIC with Dr. Jorie Favreau of Paul Smiths College
Bloomington Bog, Bigelow Rd, & Oregon Plains Rd.
Osgood River Canoe Trip
Whiteface Mountain
Madawaska
Massawepie Mire
Getting Started in Birding with Ed Kanze (Families & Beginner Birders at Paul Smiths VIC 8:00 to 11:30 a.m.)
Teddy Roosevelt Birding Challenge (Paul Smiths VIC 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Sunday, June 8, 2008 (7 to 11:30 a.m.)

Barnum Pond Canoe Paddle
Bloomington Bog, Bigelow Rd, & Oregon Plains Rd.
Osgood River Canoe Trip
Whiteface Mountain
Madawaska
Massawepie Mire



Adirondack Birding Festival
June 20 – 22, 2008

To register, please call 800-648-5239 Mon-Fri. 9 am - 4 pm. (Registration is not necessary for any of the evening presentations.) For more detailed information, visit the Hamilton County web site at: www.hamiltoncounty.com.

Friday June 20

1:00pm - CANOE: **Jessup River** from Route 30 to Indian Lake, Lake Pleasant
 2:00pm - WALK: **Perkins Clearing**, Lake Pleasant

Saturday June 21

6:00am - HIKE: **Blue Mountain**, Blue Mtn Lake (STRENUOUS)
 7:00am - CANOE: **Round Lake with a stop at Sabattis Bog**, Long Lake
 7:00am - WALK: **Perkins Clearing**, Lake Pleasant
 7:00am - WALK: **Ferds Bog**, Inlet
 1:00pm - DRIVING SAFARI: **Powley Road**, Piseco
 1:00pm - CANOE: **South Inlet of Raquette Lake**, Raquette Lake
 3:00pm - WALK: **Old Dam Nature Trail**, Inlet
 7:00pm - WALK: **Twilight Bird watch** @ Camp Sagamore, Raquette Lake

Sunday June 22

7:00am - HIKE: **Fiddlers Pond**, Arietta
 7:00am - HIKE: **Northville-Lake Placid Trail**, Long Lake
 7:00am - HIKE: **Rock Pond**, Blue Mtn Lake
 7:00am - HIKE: **Black Bear Mountain**, Inlet (STRENUOUS)
 1:30PM - CRUISE: 2-3:30pm aboard the **W.W. Durant**, Raquette Lake

The Oldest Known Bicknell's Thrush on Record

Last summer's encounter of VCE biologists and the oldest known Bicknell's Thrush on record has called into question bragging rights for longevity. On 30 May 2007, Chris Rimmer extracted Bicknell's Thrush #1531-48278 from a mist net next to a Stratton Mountain ski trail. This bird, a male, turns out to be the all-time reigning veteran of its species, having been banded by us as a yearling on 23 July 1997, in almost exactly the same spot! Assuming an approximate hatch date of 1 July 1996, its age of 10 years and 11 months places it firmly in the category of wizened avian elder. In fact, #1531-48278 has been captured a total of 29 times since 1997, in every year except 2003. It is a true legend among Bicknell's Thrushes.

For perspective, the USGS Bird Banding Lab's data base of avian longevity indicates that our Stratton male Bicknell's Thrush pales in comparison to the all-time record-holding Laysan Albatross of 50 years and 8 months. North American records for longevity belong to an Arctic Tern of 34 years and an Atlantic Puffin of 31 years and 11 months. However, consider that migratory passerine birds, being generally small bodied and metabolically high-functioning, rarely live longer than 7-8 years, if that. Among other North American thrushes, only the American Robin (a much larger bird) exceeds our Stratton Bicknell's for known longevity, with the record-setter a bird of 13 years and 11 months. Among other Catharus thrushes, a Swainson's of exactly 11 years officially tops our Stratton male, while the longevity record for Veery is 10 years and one month, for Hermit nine years and four months, and for Gray-cheeked Thrush seven years and four months.

The oldest known banded Wood Thrush is eight years, 11 months. In judging whose staying power is more impressive, Bicknell's Thrush #1531-48278's or Bicknologists Chris Rimmer's and Kent McFarland's, consider the following: we conservatively estimate that #1531-48278 has logged 35,000 straight-line miles in 10 round-trip migrations between Stratton Mountain and its presumed winter quarters on Hispaniola. We can probably double that number to account for other flying during the course of its life. Assuming that #1531-48278 has sired an average of two young per year over the 10 years of its breeding life, it has added 20 progeny, spending immeasurable amounts of energy acquiring mates and food for those young. It has endured repeatedly harsh weather at every phase of its annual cycle. The list goes on.

Rimmer and McFarland? Well, yes, they too have endured their share of hardships in pursuit of this and other Bicknell's Thrushes since 1992—sleep deprivation, rough terrain, black fly hordes, primitive living conditions, tough weather, mental anguish, etc. Give them a pat on the back for their persistence as “brute force biologists,” but there is no contest in the final analysis. Bicknell's Thrush comes out on top.

—Chris Rimmer



Bicknell's Thrush Photo by Lloyd Spitalnik

Conservatively Speaking

A new, regular column focusing on conservation issues, “Conservatively Speaking” begins its tenure in the form of the HPAS/SLAA position paper below.

St. Lawrence-Adirondack Audubon/High Peaks Audubon Society Position on the Proposed BION Ethanol Plant and Six Beef CAFOs

BION Technologies Inc. has proposed an ethanol plant and six large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) with 84,000 beef cows in New York State's St. Lawrence County. The proposed ethanol plant would be located in Ogdensburg, and the six large CAFOs, with 14,000 cows each, would be spread out in the St. Lawrence River Valley area.

St. Lawrence County provides critically important habitat for *Endangered*, *Threatened*, and *Special Concern* bird species of New York State. Five of the ten New York State Department of Environmental Conservation listed *Endangered* bird species can be found in St. Lawrence Co., while eight of ten *Threatened* species are found here, and 15 of 19 *Special Concern* species are also found in the county. From a northeastern U.S. perspective, St. Lawrence County is a vital area for grassland birds, a suite that is declining more rapidly than any other group of birds in North America. Grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in the country because they are so easily converted to high intensity agricultural crop production such as corn or other row crops. In contrast, the idyllic nature of traditional agriculture practices in the area such as infrequently mowed hayfields and

pasture provide critical breeding habitat for many ground-nesting grassland birds. In particular, St. Lawrence County is home to 17% of the global breeding population of Bobolinks, and the county's shrublands are home to an important population of the declining Golden-winged Warbler. St. Lawrence County contains seven New York State Important Bird Areas (IBAs), including the 60,000 acre Lisbon Grasslands IBA – a mosaic of wetlands and grasslands, of which a large proportion is privately owned, that is home to a wide diversity of species. The Important Bird Area program is an international bird conservation initiative with simple goals: to identify the most important places for birds, and to conserve them.

The proposed BION project would likely result in widespread loss of grassland, shrubland, and healthy forest habitats within St. Lawrence County. In the rush for biofuels, many of these fragile habitat areas would be converted to corn fields resulting in little biodiversity. The loss of critically important habitat areas would prove devastating for the many bird species that nest in the area.

Also, as recently pointed out in the prestigious journal *Science* (February 2008), the destruction of natural ecosystems results in the release of more greenhouse gases, and we are then deprived of these natural sponges that absorb carbon emissions. Cropland absorbs far less carbon than the habitat it replaces. These negative consequences greatly offset the potential gains from biofuels. In response to the supposed environmental benefits of the proposed BION project, biofuels development actually results in more greenhouse gases released to the atmosphere than conservation of natural habitats, including grasslands.

There are many other potential negative environmental impacts from the massive project BION has proposed – impacts on air quality, water quality, and groundwater – that have yet to be adequately addressed by the company. In addition, the impacts of an industrial operation of this scale on the quality of life in this rural area are unavoidable.

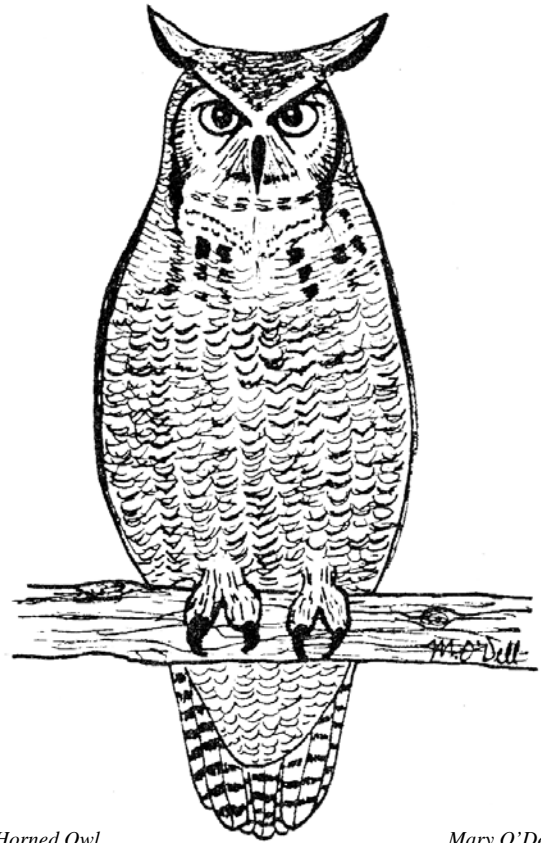
More globally, many countries are reconsidering biofuels given the large scale clearing of tropical forests and grasslands to meet the demands for more cropland. In addition, there is a growing world food crisis that is exacerbated by croplands dedicated to growing “fuel” instead of food.

For all of the above reasons and concerns, the St. Lawrence-Adirondack Audubon/High Peaks Audubon Society Chapter opposes the proposed BION Technologies Inc. ethanol/beef CAFO project in St. Lawrence County.

—Joan Collins



Northern Saw-whet Owl



Great Horned Owl

Mary O'Dell

Nominating Committee Report

The nominating committee is pleased to present the following slate for the officers and Board of Directors. We will vote for the slate at the HPAS booth at the Paul Smiths VIC on June 7, 2008 at 2 p.m

Officers

President: Charlotte Demers (2007-2009)
Vice-President: Larry Master, PhD (2008-2010)
Treasurer: Amy Freiman (2007-2009)
Secretary: John Thaxton (2007-2009)

Directors

John Brown, Vermontville; Joan Clark, Keeseville; Joan Collins, Potsdam; Jorie Favreau, PhD, Tupper Lake; Leah Filo, Childwold; Lee Harper, Massena; Glenn Johnson, PhD; Potsdam; Leslie Karasin, Saranac Lake; Melanie McCormick, Plattsburgh; Mary O'Dell, Saranac Lake; Peter O'Shea, Fine; Pat Thaxton, Keene; Mary Beth Warburton, Potsdam; Eileen Wheeler; Canton

June Board Meeting

The next HPAS/SLAA Executive Board Meeting will take place on Saturday, June 7th, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. at the Paul Smiths Visitor Interpretative Center. The meeting will be short and primarily for the purpose of voting on nominations for new officers and directors; it is open to all members. For information contact Charlotte Demers: cdemers@esf.edu

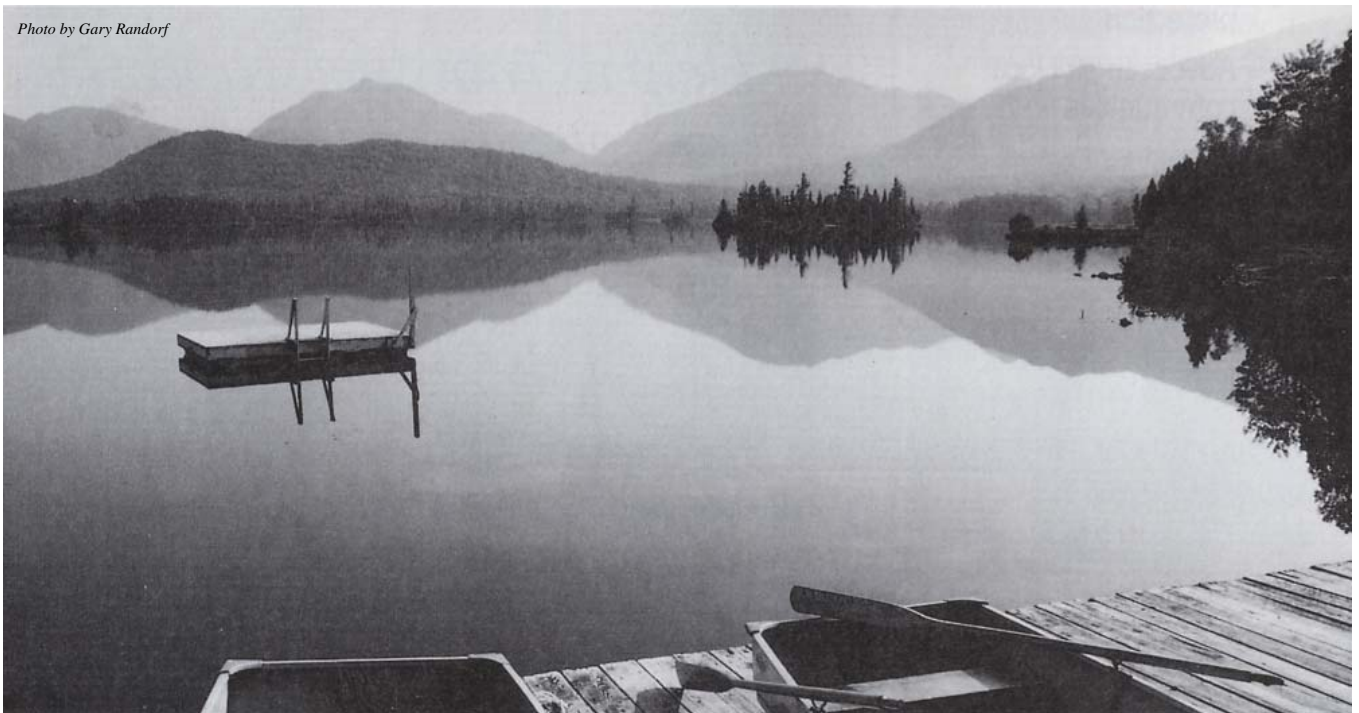
2007 HPAS Raffle

As a member and supporter of HPAS/SLAA, you contribute to an organization dedicated to conserving and restoring wild-life and their habitats through advocacy and education. All of these programs are funded by donations from HPAS members and other generous supporters. Membership dues only covers approximately 50% of the operational costs of the organization. We need your help to continue to offer a variety of activities and take advantage of educational opportunities.

This year's raffle prize is a two-night stay at the fabulous Elk Lake Lodge, which National Geographic Magazine called the "jewel of the Adirondacks." Located in a 12,000 acre private forest, Elk Lake reflects the high peaks surrounding it—Nippletop, Blake, Colvin, Dix and McComb. Private trails lead off in all directions, guests enjoy the use of complimentary canoes and rowboats and the stay includes breakfast, a picnic selected the night before and a full dinner. Absolutely unique, Elk Lake Lodge ranks high on everybody's short list. Location, location, location...

You will be receiving in the mail a book of raffle tickets that are \$5.00 each or the book of six for \$25.00. Please help support HPAS by purchasing or selling tickets. Send your check or money order made out to "High Peaks Audubon" in the envelope provided. If you would like additional raffle tickets please contact Charlotte Demers at (518)582-4551 ext 103 or cdemers@esf.edu. The drawing for this fabulous prize will be at the HPAS Annual Meeting to be held **July 26th**. For more information on this event, visit the HPAS web site (www.highpeaksaudubon.com) and click on "events".

Photo by Gary Randorf



Like to Watch Loons? Join in the ALCP's Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 19th, from 8-9a.m.

Help the Adirondack Loon Conservation Program look for loons! Join in the ALCP's Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 19th, 2008, from 8:00-9:00 a.m. For more information or to choose a lake to conduct your observations, please contact the ALCP Program Manager at asauer@wcs.org or at 518-891-8836. To learn more about the ACLP's Annual Loon Census, visit www.adkscience.org/loons.



Louis Agassiz Fuertes

Poetry Corner Anecdote of the Jar

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was upon a hill
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

—Wallace Stevens

**Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Annual Lecture:
Friday, June 6th, 2008, 7:00 p.m.
Paul Smiths Visitor Interpretative Center
Lang Elliot**

It pleases me enormously to announce that the first Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Lecture will feature Lang Elliot, the acclaimed nature recordist, photographer, author and owner of Nature Sounds, Inc.

Mr. Elliot's latest book, *The Songs of Wild Birds*, includes a CD with a stunning collection of bird songs and calls, many of them recorded in the Adirondacks, where the author lived for several years. By way of instancing how incredible some of the bird calls sound I often play for guests the *sonic boom* generated by male common nighthawks when they open their wings suddenly to break a precipitous dive from hundreds of feet in the air. Never having heard the sound, I wonder how anyone could have captured it on a recording, and I can't wait to ask Mr. Elliot how he gets these recordings.

Put this lecture on your calendar and get ready for an amazing evening of stunning photographs, wild sounds and even wilder anecdotes.

—John Thaxton

Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Education Grant

Hi Everyone,

I just wanted to give feedback on the results of our \$1,000 grant (from the Cullman Foundation) to Indian Creek Nature Center for new binoculars. Yesterday, Mary Beth Warburton and I once again participated in the Conservation Field Days event for the 6th grade classes of St. Lawrence County at Indian Creek Nature Center. We led birding hikes on the trail to the observation tower overlooking Lower Lake. Last year, the kids had to share very low-end binoculars with 3 to 4 kids per pair - needless to say, it did not work well.

This year, with 20 new pairs of Eagle Optics binoculars, the kids were completely engaged - it made a HUGE difference! Many of the kids had never looked through binoculars and their reactions were priceless. One girl came running up to me and excitedly said that she looked at the face of a person far away, and it was as if the person was right in front of her! Each class very reluctantly gave back the binoculars at the conclusion of our hour-long hikes - they thought they could keep them for the whole day! I am thrilled that our grant allowed the kids to be so engaged, and to get terrific views of many colorful birds - it may have even sparked the birding desire in many of them. It was also wonderful that Eagle Optics gave 10 free pairs to match the 10 purchased pairs for the center.

The Conservation Field Days event is held on 2 different dates, so Mary Beth and I will be leading trips again in a couple of weeks for more 6th grade classes in the county and we really look forward to it! Twelve year-olds have all kinds of fascinating things to say!!!

—Joan Collins

President's Message

The Board of Directors met in March, with representatives from both organizations, and decided upon a new name for our merged Chapters – *Northern New York Audubon*. This name best represents the broad region that we now encompass. A change to our current By-laws and our Articles of Incorporation is required to finalize the name change. The last steps to the merger between *High Peaks Audubon Society* and *St. Lawrence – Adirondack Audubon* needs to be completed and is in your hands. You will very shortly be receiving an informational mailing with a return postcard requesting your vote on the above mentioned changes. As an organization, we have many great programs and field trips scheduled for the coming year and have important conservation priorities that we will be addressing. We need to complete this merger and move forward as an organization so we can focus our energy and attention on other matters. I encourage you to return your vote proxy in favor of the changes in the By-Laws and the Articles of Incorporation. It is very important that you vote and return your proxy ballots so that we get the required number of votes to approve this name change.

—Charlotte Demers



Long-eared Owl

Mary O'Dell

Editor's Note

When I opened my eyes I realized Vermont and Hurricane Mountain had vanished in a shimmering gauze of hysterically char- treuse leaves. From a nearby perch among them a black-throated green warbler sang loudly and clearly until a sudden gust of south wind, roaring through the woods, made the white pines all around the house sound like surf pounding sand hard by a sleeper awakening. Wind wafting in the bedroom window felt close as a stranger's breath. I love waking up to different views different times of year, love looking out at a universe of leaves and branches that dissolves in late autumn into the dusty blue out- line of Vermont's Green Mountains, thirty miles away, and Hurricane Mountain, just across the road and two thousand feet up.

And I love having two views of our Audubon chapter, twice as large now as a year ago and a much more important player in Adirondack and northern New York conservation and education. The National Audubon Society officially merged the HPAS and SLAA membership data bases and now recognize us as a single chapter; some details still need ironing out, like the membership vote on changes in our bylaws, and corporate filings with the state. Please take the time to vote on the changes when you receive your ballot because we can't complete the merger unless ten percent of the membership votes.

I put the schedules of field trips and events for The Great Adirondack Birding Celebration and the Adirondack Birding Festival inside; HPAS/SLAA members developed the field trips and will lead most of them. I find it especially exciting that the GABC will open with the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Annual Lecture, which noted author, recordist and photographer Lang Elliot will deliver. I also put inside a letter Joan Collins wrote HPAS/SLAA board members about the pre- liminary results of yet another Cullman Grant (future newsletters will have plenty of news about those).

Joan Collins accepted my invitation to write a regular column on conservation issues and I named the column *Conserva- tively Speaking*, in deference to the real definition of the word *conservative*, which means someone who thinks change should occur gradually, after considerable study, evaluation and debate. The *conservatives* out there who ignore the constitution, con- done the torture of other human beings, refused to regulate the mortgage market, continue to press for turning the Arctic Na- tional Wildlife Refuge into an oil field, etc., etc, represent a bastardization of the word they use to describe themselves. I found the HPAS/SLAA position paper on the proposed BION ethanol plant and concentrated animal feeding operations, which Joan wrote, an excellent first *Conservatively Speaking* column.

Beginning with the next issue, contributors at the Donor (\$100 per year) level and higher will start receiving a color edi- tion of the newsletter. For the last exclusively black and white issue I used several pen and ink owl drawings by board member Mary O'Dell, a wetlands specialist who works for the APA. Mary's purity of line and assiduous attention to detail had me think- ing of Durer and William Morris, her playfulness of Aubrey Beardsley (shame on those of you who just flashed on *Lysistrata*).

—John Thaxton